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Economic Commission for Europe**Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management****Eighty-third session**

Geneva, 4-5 April 2022 (Part I); and San Marino, 3-6 October 2022 (Part II)

Item 2 of the provisional agenda

Second Forum of Mayors

Item 6 of the provisional agenda

Report on the outcomes of the second Forum of Mayors and related recommendations**Summary of the Second Forum of Mayors****Note by the secretariat***Summary*

This document contains the summary of the Second Forum of Mayors, which constituted Part I of the eighty-third session of the Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management (CUDHLM). The Forum was held on 4-5 April 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland, back-to-back with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (RFSD), as mandated by the ECE Executive Committee (ECE/EX/2020/L.16).

The summary is meant to provide substantive input to the reports of RFSD and CUDHLM in accordance with the decision of EXCOM (ECE/EX/2020/L.16). It was presented to RFSD on 6 April 2022 by the rapporteur of the Forum of Mayors, Ms. Josiane Lei, mayor of Evian, France.

The Committee is invited to take note this document.

I. Overview

1. The Second Forum of Mayors was held in hybrid format under the theme “Recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic while advancing the implementation of the SDGs” and was chaired by the Chair of CUDHLM, Ms. Doris Andoni (Albania). It brought together around 500 online and in-person participants, representing cities and member States from across the ECE region and beyond, the United Nations Regional Commissions and specialized organizations, non-governmental organizations and the academia.

2. Mayors and vice mayors from 44 cities shared their experiences in finding people-centered solutions, which simultaneously meet the needs and aspirations of their citizens, hedge against disasters and rise to the challenges of climate change in a manner that ensures the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030

Agenda). These experiences were shared during the four thematic sessions of the Forum, which focused on global challenges identified in the Geneva Declaration of Mayors¹:

- Session 1: Sustainable urban transport, shared mobility and safer roads;
- Session 2: Vibrant public spaces, greener cities and nature-based solutions;
- Session 3: Resilient, healthy and climate neutral buildings and affordable and adequate housing;
- Session 4: Sustainable urban planning, the 15-minute city and smart urban development solutions.

3. The Second Forum of Mayors also featured side events to enable participants to delve deeper into the issues raised during the thematic sessions. The side events focused on the following themes:

(a) “Local Resilience to climate change and COVID-19 – No one left behind in urban resilience building”, jointly organized with the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat), the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Geneva Cities Hub and held in hybrid format at the Geneva Cities Hub office, Villa Rigot, Geneva, Switzerland on 4 April 2022.

(b) “Urban Pandemic Preparedness - City contributions to international processes on pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response”, jointly organized with UN-Habitat and the World Health Organization and held in hybrid format at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland on 5 April 2022.

(c) “Localizing the Sustainable Development Goals - Voluntary Local Reviews in the UNECE region. Experiences and good practices”, jointly organized with UN-Habitat and the University of Geneva and held in hybrid format at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland on 5 April 2022.

4. In addition, ECE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the European Football Associations (UEFA) with the aim of showing how football and hosting UEFA events can support cities to become more sustainable. The MoU was signed during the side event “Football as accelerator of change”, held in-person at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland on 5 April 2022.

5. This document contains a summary of the discussions during the four thematic sessions of the Second Forum of Mayors.

II. Opening remarks and keynote speeches

6. In her opening remarks, the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Ms. Tatiana Valovaya, characterized the COVID-19 pandemic as a threat to the world’s most vulnerable people, the global economy and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Director-General emphasized that, in some cases, the pandemic has slowed or reversed hard-won progress towards the achievement of SDGs, including goal 11 (sustainable cities and communities), with one out of eight people in the world living now in slums without access to running water, sanitation, hygiene and waste management services. She further said that as the trend to urbanization continues, city leaders must become the frontrunners of sustainable, low-carbon and resilient future.

7. The Director-General also acknowledged the importance of the Geneva Declaration of Mayors for supporting the achievement of SDGs. She noted that the Declaration sets out the mayors’ commitment to strengthen the resilience of their cities, make them greener, ensure sustainable urban transport and affordable housing for all, and make their cities more equitable and inclusive, within the context of a multi-level approach - one that strengthens the links between the States, cities, the United Nations entities and other stakeholders. She

¹ The Geneva Declaration of Mayors is available at <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2021-03/Mayors%20declaration%20booklet%20-%20ver.4.pdf>.

also recognized that the potential of the Forum of Mayors extends far beyond the ECE region and that its outcomes will contribute to the global vision of the future of cities.

8. The Director-General said that action in three particular areas would be instrumental. First, the broad mobilization of all actors and partners, with governments leading the way and more sectors of society joining in. Young people in particular are a substantial force for positive change, already placing climate change and inclusive sustainable development higher up on the political agenda. Second, the need to raise ambition, including meeting commitments of governments for international development cooperation, climate finance and climate action. Third, the need for game-changing solutions and breakthrough innovations that would help deliver concrete results at scale.

9. In her speech, the Executive Secretary of ECE, Ms. Olga Algayerova, noted that city leaders are helping realize the vision of the United Nations Secretary General of “a stronger, more networked and inclusive multilateral system, anchored within the United Nations” by supporting city-to-city collaboration anchored in a shared, forward-looking vision and the common aspirations set out in the Geneva Declaration of Mayors. She further said that the range of topics during the Second Forum of Mayors reflects the city leaders’ determination to make a difference at the national, regional and global level - the basic elements that are needed for a new and inclusive multilateralism.

10. Referring to the role of cities in addressing the current challenges facing the region, the Executive Secretary recognized that cities have always been at the forefront of the response to emerging as well as long-lasting, economic and social challenges. This was never more evident than since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic when many city leaders designed and implemented innovative solutions to protect the citizens, while maintaining key public services and inventing new ones.

11. The Executive Secretary emphasized that “there is no more compelling measure of the scale of the challenges and the urgency for a new multilateralism than the present Ukrainian crisis”. She expressed her concern over the detrimental consequences of the negative economic impacts of the conflict in Ukraine and the shrinking policy space in the ECE region on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. She mentioned that the annual SDG progress report of ECE for the region showed that progress since 2020 has been too slow. The Executive Secretary emphasized that “with the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic not yet fully reflected in available data, and the impact of the war in Ukraine still to be assessed, the risk that the region will fail on the 2030 Agenda has never been so high”.

12. The Executive Secretary conveyed that ECE counts on mayors and vice mayors to lead the way in strengthening connections of the cities; improving the resilience of cities in the region; addressing the long-term social, economic and environmental needs of cities; and finding local solutions to global challenges. She added that city leaders are a shining example of the new multilateralism, and their dedication and creativity are needed more than ever to rise to the immediate and long-term challenges facing the cities in the region and beyond. She affirmed that the joint initiatives and actions cities undertake are indispensable and that ECE is committed to support city leaders every step of the way.

13. In her speech, the Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, commended ECE for its contributions to the New Urban Agenda and other associated processes like the Task Force on the Future of Cities of the United Nations Secretary General. The Executive Director values the deepening relationship of city leaders with ECE, not only from a policy perspective but also with an increasing joint project portfolio, tackling many of the important issues such as climate change, housing, human rights and gender inequities, and access to basic services. She expressed the importance of the work being done together on Voluntary Local Reviews and the #Housing2030 initiative.

14. The Executive Director noted that the Forum of Mayors has generated significant interest globally and that UN-Habitat is pleased to contribute to its further development. She also mentioned the significant contribution the Forum of Mayors makes to increasing the role of cities in multilateralism. She said further that the Forum promotes solidarity, provides a common position, and enables the sharing of experience and a much-needed platform to seek solutions to the most pressing problems.

15. Addressing the mayors and other city leaders, the Executive Director of UN-Habitat highlighted that their work is now more important than ever, given the multiple and overlapping challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, a rapidly worsening climate crisis and conflicts in the ECE region and around the world. She pointed out that poverty, inequity and exclusion have increased to unprecedented levels in many communities and that it is always the most vulnerable, women and children who suffer the greatest burden. The Executive Director recognized that city leaders are on the frontline, often balancing between the needs of an immediate crisis response, while at the same time maintaining fragile local economies with increasing demands on housing and basic services. She stated that city leaders have demonstrated an impressive spirit and solidarity and many of the communities they support, and she feels secure in the knowledge that under their leadership cities can become more sustainable, inclusive, resilient, and safer. The Executive Director announced that UN-Habitat is proud to accompany city leaders in their journey.

16. In his speech, Deputy Mayor Sami Kanaan of Geneva, Switzerland, noted that the Forum of Mayors is unique, as it allows for integrating the perspective of local authorities into the United Nations multilateral framework. He added that it is an embodiment of the vision of the United Nations Secretary-General of a new agile and inclusive multilateralism. At a time when geopolitical tensions are at their highest and when multilateralism is being challenged, it is important for ECE to remain an open space for dialogue for the region, as it has demonstrated in the past. The deputy mayor of Geneva expressed hope that the Forum can strengthen and deepen the space for dialogue at several levels - between the mayors themselves, with the States and with the United Nations.

17. The deputy mayor stressed that the present challenges of today are too significant, numerous and complex, with repercussions on many levels, to be the sole responsibility of States. He noted that mayors are on the front line to manage the impact of crises, something which was seen throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. He said further that mayors are taking steps to better address climate change, including insulating buildings and encouraging citizens to change consumption habits.

18. The deputy mayor noted that to support a new and inclusive multilateralism, the city and canton of Geneva, and the Swiss Confederation created the Geneva Cities Hub whose mission is to encourage dialogue and cooperation between cities, their networks, States and international organizations. To this end, the deputy mayor said that the Geneva Cities Hub highlights and gives importance to local authorities and their solutions to global challenges, thereby contributing to the multilateral processes. He mentioned the Mayor's Action Platform that was set up by the Geneva Cities Hub to facilitate the exchange of urban practices, and encouraged city leaders to sign up. The deputy mayor expressed his hope that other initiatives will join this more inclusive multilateral landscape of the Forum of Mayors, so as to ensure that the debates and decisions taken in international Geneva best reflect the diverse and multiple aspirations of societies.

19. In his keynote speech, architect Norman Foster noted that the Forum of Mayors is a very powerful initiative for supporting city-to-city collaboration, and only the United Nations can deliver on the task of integrating cities into the multilateral framework. Referring to the COVID-19 pandemic and previous wars, he emphasized that cities always bounce back stronger, continue to be front runners in "going back to life" and are well on their way to recovery. He noted that rapid urbanization means that cities face great challenges which, for many, are compounded by the influx of migrants and, most recently, refugees fleeing from Ukraine. Mayors from neighboring cities and beyond became the fortitude, and are to be saluted for their efforts.

20. Mr. Foster highlighted the importance of urban design masterplans for guiding reconstruction efforts in Ukraine. He referred to the masterplan for reconstruction and growth that the city of London commissioned in 1943, two years before the end of the second world war. He added that London recommissioned its plan for the next twenty-five years in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. He reminded mayors of the importance of masterplans for future generations, as they shape all aspects of everyday life, including, basic infrastructure and transport. He explained that these plans constitute the DNA of cities and that issues such as the sustainability of cities are a function of master plans, and cities that are vibrant are people-centered and integrate affordable housing.

21. Mr. Forster added that masterplans need to be based on a holistic approach for future generations. He said that these plans are not about the size of investments, but about the wise use of resources and that minor changes, implemented within the context of small-scale urban design plans, can improve the quality of life, such as repurposing spaces allocated for cars to public spaces for all citizens. He cited the example of the closure of one side of the Trafalgar Square in London, which reduced the traffic and transformed this space from a chaotic one into the living room of the city. Other examples of small-scale urban design plans include that of the city of Marseille for reducing traffic and that of the Bronx River for biodiversity restoration.

22. Mr. Foster noted that citizens are much more open to change than we think, and for creating green spaces, parks and planting trees that improve the quality of life. Trees are not only beautiful, but also absorb carbon emissions, thereby making cities more sustainable. He said that reducing dependence on fossil fuels is another example of change that makes for a vibrant city, though electric cars are not as green as widely believed. Mr. Foster emphasized that cities have the potential to shape the future and hoped that the third Forum of Mayors will see all mayors from all countries come together, learn from each other, and create an extraordinary network in a quest for excellence and sustainability.

23. In his keynote speech, the United Nations Special Envoy for Road Safety, Mr. Jean Todt, shared his vision for cities. He expressed his hopes for cities to be a thriving space, one where reaching opportunities, essential services and loved ones are seamless, connected, and safe. He described future cities as lush, and vibrant, where walking, cycling and green spaces are at the core of mobility; where technology is used to build infrastructure that accommodates the mobility needs of citizens; and where mobility does not compromise the environment and enables its benefits.

24. The Special Envoy noted that this vision can be realized by meeting the demands for mobility in creative ways. He added that the demand for mobility prevailed during the COVID-19 pandemic, when essential services and goods were only possible with agile transport systems within and between cities. He said further that mobility is the heart of cities and it is a collective duty to ensure that the heart is safe, healthy, and sustainable. He commented that a successful city is one with zero road traffic crashes, zero harmful emissions, zero congestion and zero injuries and losses of lives to road crashes.

25. To this end, the Special Envoy noted that there are simple solutions that cities can implement. He cited, as solutions, implementing temporary or permanent superblocks or car-free areas that promote walking and cycling; building inclusive urban spaces; and managing traffic in cities. He drew attention to the budding international movement “streets for life”, which promotes implementing 20 or 30 km per hour speed limit, especially around schools and other areas with high pedestrian traffic. Following the opening remarks and keynote speeches, item A of CUDHLM agenda was adopted.²

III. Sustainable urban transport, shared mobility and safer roads

26. The first thematic session of the Second Forum of Mayors on *Urban transport, shared mobility and safer roads* was co-moderated by Mr. Tomaso Rossini, Captain of the Castle, San Marino, San Marino and Mr. Giampiero Bambagioni, CUDHLM Bureau member, Italy. The Director of ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, Ms. Paola Deda, highlighted the

² When opening the floor, the Chair of the Second Forum of Mayors reminded participants to restrict their interventions to matters within the mandate of CUDHLM and the thematic sessions of the Second Forum of Mayors. The representative of the Russian Federation noted that his country disassociates itself from the decision of the ECE Executive Committee to rescind the invitations to Russian city officials (ECE/EX/2022/L.7). The representative of the European Union (EU) stressed the condemnation of the EU of the Russian Federation invasion of Ukraine. The representative of Ukraine noted that his country aligns itself with the statement of the EU. The representative of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland stated that his country stands in solidarity with Ukraine. The representative of the Russian Federation noted that such discussions are not to be made in this Forum. The Executive Committee decision ECE/EX/2022/L.7 is available at https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/ECE_EX_2022_L.7-2203316E.pdf.

essential elements of the thematic session including, among others, people-centred transport systems, reducing the use of cars, energy efficiency and sharing economy, which carry direct contributions to the achievement of SDG 3 (health); SDG 7 (energy); SDG 9 (resilient infrastructure); SDG 11 (sustainable transport systems; road safety). This thematic session is also linked with the shared aspirations of the ECE mayors established under the Geneva Declaration of Mayors, particularly:

- (a) Ambitious climate action: Accelerate the transition to carbon neutrality;
- (b) Transition to sustainable energy: Improve the energy efficiency of cities to save energy;
- (c) Sustainable urban transport: Aimed at reducing traffic congestion and environmental pollution, and increasing road safety .

27. The mayors and vice mayors of Boston (United States of America), Freetown (Sierra Leone), Gaziantep (Turkey), Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia), San Marino (San Marino), Tbilisi (Georgia), Trondheim (Norway), Utrecht, (Netherlands), Yerevan (Armenia) shared their experiences in ensuring sustainable urban transport for all their citizens, a commitment which they all took upon themselves as an indispensable requisite for improving the quality of life for their citizens and achieving the SDGs.

28. The city leaders highlighted, as a major challenge, the high level of congestion and pollution caused by the heavy reliance on cars as the main mode of urban transport. Some cities saw this trend aggravated by the pandemic. This was particularly the case for Yerevan with social distancing causing citizens to retreat from using public transport, thereby undoing the progress made in reducing the use of cars. The city leaders also singled out road safety as a major concern, noting that every injury or death caused by traffic accidents is “one too many”. Others noted the lack of finance as a major impediment to bringing their plans into fruition. Yet others noted that at issue are the inadequate design master plans inherited from the past. These master plans have exaggerated focus on making space for cars, which are seen as essential for mobility and as a sign of prosperity.

29. The city leaders shared the following creative solutions for addressing the above challenges, implemented within the context of broader urban mobility plans:

(a) *Ensuring the efficient use of roads* by introducing transit systems for connecting cities and linking them to regional and international transport corridors (Yerevan); repurposing roads previously allocated for cars to public transport, bicycles and pedestrians (Tbilisi, Yerevan and Kuala Lumpur), while greening bicycle and pedestrian streets or “doing with less cars and more trees” (Utrecht).

(b) *Revamping the city’s public transport bus fleet* by purchasing modern buses that are compliant with international quality, health, safety and environmental conservation requirements (Gaziantep and Yerevan).

(c) *Establishing modern traffic control centres* which use intelligent traffic-light management and closed-circuit television (CCTV) to monitor road conditions (Yerevan). Such centres improve traffic flow by temporarily expanding road capacity, resulting in reduced queuing times and consequently shorter travel times. Furthermore, the fast and responsive signaling to road users increases traffic safety.

(d) *Establishing mass transit systems in highly dense cities/areas*, including subways, tubes and trams (instead of buses) to increase the capacity of public transport, while reducing congestion and pollution (Freetown, Gaziantep and Kuala Lumpur).

(e) *Dispensing with highways*. Utrecht closed down a major highway and resorted to waterway as the main transport mode within the context of the city’s “healthy urban living” vision.

(f) *Repurposing abandoned tunnels* to serve as pedestrian and bicycle lanes (San Marino).

(g) *Sharing mobility by using smart applications*, and this is the case of Trondheim with its *Mobee* application, which is widely promoted. The application is used for, among other things, organizing scavenger hunts.

(h) *Improving mobility through widening pedestrian pavements and using solar streetlights*, thereby achieving the twin objective of increasing road safety and using renewable energy sources (Freetown).

(i) *Promoting electronic mobility (e-mobility)*, including e-buses and e-scooters (Gaziantep).

(j) *Mobility for all* by subsidizing public transport (Gaziantep) or transforming public transport into a public good (Boston). In the case of Boston, this measure, which was launched on a small scale (Route 28), is also a means to address racial disparity and will be extended to other routes.

IV. Vibrant public spaces, green cities and nature-based solutions

30. The second thematic session on *Vibrant public spaces, green cities and nature-based solutions* was held in two parts. Part I took place on 4 April 2022 and was co-moderated by Mr. Erion Veliaj, mayor of Tirana, Albania and Ms. Marie-Pierre Meganck, CUDHLM Bureau Member, France. The second part took place on 5 April 2022 and was co-moderated by Ms. Sharon Dijkma, mayor of Utrecht, Netherlands and Ms. Stephanie FÜRER, CUDHLM Bureau Member, Switzerland.

31. The Director of ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, Ms. Paola Deda, highlighted the essential elements of the thematic session, which include, among other things, vibrant spaces, nature-based solutions, biodiversity and energy efficiency, with direct contribution to the achievement of SDG 2 (urban agriculture); SDG 3 (health); SDG 11 (accessible, green public spaces; air quality; waste management); SDG 13 (climate); and SDG 15 (urban forests). This thematic session is also linked with the shared aspirations of ECE mayors established under the Geneva Declaration of Mayors, particularly:

- (a) Ambitious climate action: Focus on climate change adaptation;
- (b) Make our cities greener: Promote urban biodiversity and improve the energy efficiency of cities to save energy;
- (c) Resilient cities: Create environments which improve the physical, mental and environmental health of our communities.

32. The mayors and vice mayors of Accra (Ghana), Bari (Italy), Bonn (Germany), Debrecen (Hungary), Ghent (Belgium), Grenoble (France), Helsingborg (Sweden), Hod Hasharon (Israel), Larnaca (Cyprus), Loulé, (Portugal), Madrid (Spain), Ohrid (North Macedonia), Tirana (Albania), Tallinn (Estonia), Riga (Latvia), Ungheni (Republic of Moldova), Vilnius (Lithuania), and Victoria (Canada) shared their experiences in creating vibrant spaces, a commitment which they all took upon themselves as an indispensable requisite for improving the quality of life for their citizens and for achieving the SDGs.

33. The mayors and vice mayors noted that cities are facing historic challenges. From the COVID-19 pandemic to earthquakes and increasing climate change-related hazards and conflicts, city leaders are confronted with multi-faceted disasters, with detrimental impact on the most vulnerable segments of the population, which are invariably the hardest hit.

34. In their interventions, mayors and vice mayors portrayed visions, plans and projects for creating vibrant urban environments, which will improve the physical and mental health of all citizens while protecting the environment and using nature-based solutions to conserve biodiversity at the local level and across landscapes. City leaders singled out the challenge of dispensing with the existing car-centred city designs, a process which many dubbed as “reclaiming the public space” for people-centered cities. They also pointed to the worsening air quality, biodiversity, the lingering impacts of climate change including desertification and the imperatives of phasing-out dependence on fossil fuel and improving energy efficiency.

35. Cities are learning from the COVID-19 pandemic and are effectively turning it into an opportunity for creativity and innovation. In so doing, they demonstrate that creative solutions do not necessarily mean huge investments. Rather, and as shown below, they involve a

reconsideration of resource allocation to increase efficiency and maximize the welfare of citizens. The solutions cited by city leaders feature a special emphasis on:

(a) *Business facilitation to encourage citizens to switch to e-cars.* In the case of Tirana, the city introduced a fast-track licensing procedure for e-cars taxi drivers, a solution that is cost-free for the municipality.

(b) *Public spaces for education and instilling a sense of co-creation.* This is the case of Bari that created an urban polycentrism across its 12 neighborhoods under the theme “tactical urbanism”.

(c) *Transforming car parking lots into vibrant green public spaces* with urban furniture and pedestrian lanes (Riga and Victoria).

(d) *Repurposing land for agriculture* within the context of a strategy for sustainable food production and consumption, wherein local produce is sourced from the outskirts for sale in the city centre and transported by boat instead of cars. This is the practice in Ghent. The cities of Grenoble and Hod HaSharon are also using urban agriculture as a way for greening the city and connecting citizens.

(e) *Deploying the notion of green public spaces in streets.* This was the case of Vilnius that transformed narrow, car-centric streets into green spaces with pedestrian and bicycle lanes as well as benches for people to connect based on 12 principles for harmonized street design³.

(f) *Creating bicycle and pedestrian lanes* alongside lakes (Ohrid) and coasts (Loulé, with its 40-km biking path along the coast).

(g) *Beautifying iconic spaces* by transforming them into vibrant green spaces for citizens to connect (Tirana).

(h) *Free public transport* to reduce the use of cars and, thereof, pollution (Loulé).

(i) *Using vibrant green spaces* as a means for climate adaptation and mitigation strategies. This is the case of Loulé that has adopted its first climate action plan.

(j) *Planting trees* to create a green belt of 100,000 trees and metropolitan forests (both the case in Madrid); joining the ECE Trees in Cities Challenge (Bonn, Helsingborg and Tirana); and launching schemes for involving children in planting trees (children are given trees to plant on their birthdays, Tirana).

(k) *Establishing youth education centres* to emotionally connect the future generation to nature (Bonn, Debrecen, Helsingborg and Larnaca).

(l) *Finding creative solutions for financing vibrant spaces.* In Ungheni funds raised from the diaspora (through an independent fund) were used to create a central stadium for the youth.

(m) *Revitalizing for and with citizens*, whereby the focus is on co-creating vibrant spaces tailored to the specific needs of communities (Grenoble and Helsingborg).

(n) *Redesigning* old streets so that they become people-centered and rolling back grey infrastructure in favour of nature-based solutions (Victoria).

V. Online connection to the mayor of Kharkiv

36. Mr. Igor Terekhov, the mayor of Kharkiv, connected online to address the Forum. He noted that Kharkiv implemented major projects in 2021, which became landmarks, not just for Kharkiv, but for all of Ukraine. The city revitalized the entire public transport fleet, including purchasing modern buses and creating dozens of new municipal routes. The city was planning to build a new metro station, extend the subway system, create a network of city parks and benches, an ice-skating area and an oceanarium.

³ <https://vilnius.lt/en/2021/11/03/vilnius-presents-the-harmonised-standard-of-streets/>.

37. The war destroyed the city's plans and decades of achievements. In total, 1,600 infrastructure facilities were destroyed by end of March 2022, of which 1,300 were residential buildings. Dozens of schools, kindergartens and hospitals were also destroyed. Residents lost their lives and hundreds of thousands were forced to flee Kharkiv. As of 5 April 2022, around 30 per cent of Kharkiv citizens have left the city. Humanitarian aid will continue to be invaluable. Yet, the mayor of Kharkiv is aiming to build a better city in the future - one that is safer, more liveable, and in tune with modern trends while preserving its old color, character and spirit.⁴

VI. Resilient, healthy and climate-neutral buildings and affordable and adequate housing

38. The third thematic session *on Resilient, healthy and climate-neutral buildings and affordable and adequate housing* was co-moderated by Mr. Mārtiņš Staķis, mayor of Riga, Latvia and Ms. Stephanie Furer, CUDHLM Bureau member, Switzerland. The Director of ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, Ms. Paola Deda, noted the essential elements of this thematic session, which include, among other things, resilient buildings equipped for withstanding extreme weather conditions, housing affordability, adequate living space, smart solutions for making buildings fit for purpose and energy efficiency, which directly contribute to SDG 7 (energy); SDG 9 (resilient infrastructure); and SDG 11 (sustainable urbanization; human settlements). This thematic session is also linked with the shared aspirations of ECE mayors established under the Geneva Declaration of Mayors, particularly:

(a) Ambitious climate action: Accelerating the transition to carbon neutrality by promoting the use of renewable energy and increasing energy efficiency and low-carbon alternatives, especially in housing.

(b) Transition to sustainable energy: Promoting high performance buildings with no- or low- carbon energy sources to reduce the carbon footprint of cities.

(c) Strengthen cities' resilience: Allocating funds for contingency plans and using smart city solutions.

(d) Inclusive cities: Building inclusive cities which guarantee equal rights and participation of all.

39. The city leaders of Athens (Greece), Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), Bratislava (Slovakia), Cork (Ireland), Bristol (United Kingdom), Katowice (Poland) and Vaduz (Liechtenstein) shared their experiences in creating resilient, healthy and climate-neutral buildings which they all took upon themselves as an indispensable requisite for improving the quality of life for their residents.

40. City leaders highlighted several challenges, most notably the shortage of housing supply, which makes it difficult to ensure housing affordability. This trend has been further aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which put a halt on construction activity. In the case of Bratislava, these challenges are compounded by a limited share of city-owned property. Several noted the need to expand the scope of housing policy to address the entire range of problems facing the vulnerable segments of the population. Others stressed the urgency of refurbishing the existing housing stock and the creation of new climate-neutral and energy-efficient homes to achieve the targets of the Paris Agreement. The city leaders emphasized that the planning of residential and non-residential buildings should be in line with and respect cultural values of their residents and design should be flexible for multi-purpose use. They shared the following creative solutions:

⁴ The representative of the Russian Federation took the floor and rejected the accusations made by the mayor of Kharkiv. The representative of the United States of America took the floor to condemn the unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation and offered support to the mayor of Kharkiv and the people of Ukraine. The representatives of France, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the mayor of Kutaisi, Georgia took the floor to condemn the war and offered support to the mayor of Kharkiv and the people of Ukraine.

- (a) *Transforming old buildings into community centres* for sheltering vulnerable groups (Athens).
- (b) *Refurbishing of housing stock, factories and old mines* into affordable housing and public spaces (Katowice).
- (c) *Using sustainable construction materials* for achieving affordability and sustainability goals (Bristol).
- (d) *Reconceptualizing the supply of affordable and adequate homes* so that they become a tool for strengthening participation, social inclusion and quality (Bratislava).
- (e) *Utilizing upgrades of basic and social infrastructure upgrades* for 75,000 people as a catalyst for economic development and sustainability (Bishkek).
- (f) *Engagement of youth in promoting energy-efficient homes* through education centres (Cork and Vaduz).

VII. Sustainable urban planning, the 15-minute city and smart urban development solutions

41. The fourth thematic session on *Resilient, Sustainable urban planning, the 15-minute city and smart urban development solutions* was co-moderated by Mr. Pekka Timonen, mayor of Lahti, Finland and Ms. Doris Andoni, Chair, CUDHLM, Albania. The Director of ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, Ms. Paola Deda, noted the essential elements of the thematic session, which include, among other things, proximity to services, promoting cultural diversity, reduction of car use, and smart solutions, and the interlinkages among the SDGs - SDG 2 (food security); SDG 3 (health); SDG 7 (energy); SDG 9 (resilient infrastructure); SDG 11 (sustainable urbanization; human settlements; transport); SDG 15 (access to green areas). This thematic session is also linked with the shared aspirations of the ECE mayors established under the Geneva Declaration of Mayors, particularly:

- (a) Strengthen cities' resilience;
- (b) Ambitious climate action;
- (c) Sustainable and safe transport;
- (d) Inclusive cities.

42. The city leaders of Agadir (Morocco), Alba Iulia (Romania), Bern (Switzerland), Burgas (Bulgaria), Campinas (Brazil), Reykjavik (Iceland), Kranj (Slovenia), Lahti (Finland), Podgorica (Montenegro) and Vienna (Austria) shared their experiences in facilitating access and promoting proximity to services in line with the 15-minute city concept. This concept gained increased urgency during the pandemic as a way to support the city's resilience and social solidarity, and smart information technology solutions were highlighted as essential requisite for successful implementation. The Forum city leaders shared the following creative solutions which should be conceptualized "with citizens and for citizens":

(a) *Implementing the 15-minute city concept around the city's main river* to integrate it into the daily life of citizens and turn it into a place for connecting the neighbourhoods and using buildings as a means for bolstering social cohesion. A case in point is the house of religion in Bern that unites 11 religions under one roof.

(b) *Ensuring efficient use of land*, one which reduces the use of cars and gains back neighbourhoods for citizens with essential services, such as shops, strategically located within a 15-minute walking or cycling distance. Such use of land is essential for improving the health of all citizens (Reykjavik).

(c) *15-minute city as part of smart urban development solutions* which involve transforming industrial areas to housing units and allocating a large part of the city's housing units to affordable and adequate housing; locating essential services within 15-minute walking or cycling distance from residential areas; increasing cycling and pedestrian lanes; and promoting the use of e-cars (Vienna). Other elements include bike-sharing systems; promoting the use of recycled material; local sourcing of food and combating food waste;

planting trees in city centres; building public charging centres for e-cars; and promoting the use of e-buses; and green roofs (Kranj). The use of renewable energy sources, such as bio-energy as a pre-requisite not only for smart urban development but also for generating savings. Examples include the electrification of public transportation, as e-bus fleets are cheaper than diesel buses and their resale value of is guaranteed, and promoting the use of e-bikes (Lahti).

(d) *Closing off the city centre for cars* and building new parking spaces outside the city (Podgorcia).

(e) *Climate-neutral smart transport systems for 15-minute cities that are fit for rising to the climate challenge*. Cities are assigning separate roads for public transport, creating bicycle lanes, and promoting use of e-scooters (Alba Iulia and Campinas).

(f) *Sustainable urban solutions* should feature a special emphasis on conserving bio-diversity. A case in point is Burgas with its Natura 2000 protected zones which are close to the city and home to 315 species.

(g) *A city-wide integrated platform offering innovative ways* for social interaction which is a new service developed during the pandemic, now serving as a tool for promoting tourism (Burgas).

VIII. Discussions and overview of local actions for implementing the 2030 Agenda

43. The Forum city leaders emphasized that addressing the challenges mentioned requires simultaneous integration of SDGs into local and national levels. This would provide a common objective and, thereof, allow for creating dynamic synergies between local and national development efforts. Several cities launched their own SDG plans such as Utrecht with its “healthy urban living” vision for 2040.⁵ The transport and urban development master plan of the city of Gaziantep is another example, as it is geared towards ensuring that “no one is left behind”. The city of Trondheim is working together with ECE to implement sustainable development projects and has established a national network with Norwegian cities to implement projects within the context of the Horizon 2020⁶ programme of the European Union. The aim is to, among other things, to reduce greenhouse emissions by 20 per cent by 2030, increase the share of renewable energy use to 20 per cent, and improve energy efficiency by 20 per cent. The city of Kuala Lumpur is committed to increasing the share of public transport mobility to 70 per cent by 2040, while Debrecen and Bonn want to become carbon-neutral by 2050 and 2035, respectively. Lahti and Alba Iulia are committed to becoming climate-neutral by 2025 and 2030, respectively.

44. City leaders emphasized that without a participatory approach, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to ensure responsiveness to the needs of all citizens. Even with broad-based participation, translating the forward-looking plans and solutions into reality was not without challenges. Citizens resisted each solution because they saw them as a disruption to their day-to-day life or a departure from the familiar. The importance of “standing the course” and thinking about the future generation instead of the next election was a constant refrain among the city leaders.

45. Cities reflected on the passions of their people and how city diplomacy and multilateralism work in and for cities. They expressed their solidarity with Ukraine, emphasized their readiness to host Ukrainian refugees, help Ukrainian cities “build back better” so that they surpass modern cities, and stressed that peace is an essential precondition for the creation of green and vibrant cities. Athens pledged to rebuild the maternity hospital in Mariupol.

⁵ <https://healthyurbanliving.utrecht.nl/>

⁶ The Horizon 2020 (2014-2020) was the 8th Framework Programme for Research and Innovation of the European Union for research and innovation with 2020 climate and energy targets to reduce greenhouse emissions by 20 per cent, increase the share of renewable energy use to 20 per cent and improve energy efficiency by 20 per cent.

46. The mayor of Vilnius read the text of a declaration that was signed by mayors on the margins of the Forum. The mayor informed that the declaration is open for signature online, also by mayors who did not participate in the Forum, until Friday, 8 April 2022. The secretariat clarified that the declaration cannot be considered as an official outcome of the Forum.

47. The representative of United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) thanked ECE for inviting representatives from Central Asia, such as Kuala Lumpur, to the Forum and noted that the Forum is an important international event. The representative of the Geneva Cities Hub invited the mayors to share their experiences and good practices, so that they can be included in the online Mayors' Action Platform. Further, the representative proposed that the Forum of Mayors provides more informal discussions to link local governments.

48. The representative of Slovakia suggested linking the Forum of Mayors to the work of CUDHLM more predominantly. The private sector highlighted the need for more coordinated approach to smart and sustainable green cities, and using Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) as a means for reporting to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. Representatives of the academia noted that the Forum of Mayors has an important role in supporting the new multilateralism, and offered their support to city leaders to improve the interface between science and practice so as to localize the SDGs.

IX. Approval of recommendations by mayors on the future of the Forum of Mayors

49. The Director of ECE Forests, Land and Housing Division, Ms. Paola Deda, reminded the city leaders that a background document was shared with the CUDHLM Bureau, and went through three rounds of informal discussions in 2022: 15 February, 11 March and 28 March. The background document reflects the mayors' views and is published as a Note by the secretariat on the website of the Forum of Mayors. The background document was informally approved and will be transmitted to the Committee for its consideration during the 2nd part of the eighty-third session of the Committee, in San Marino. It will feed into the evaluation of the Forum of Mayors.
